

PP Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Foolish World

Text Proverbs 1:1-7

2/15-16/2014

PP I read an excerpt from an article titled, 'Is Google Making Us Stupid?' by Nicholas Carr. In it he wrote, "...*what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy in a Jet Ski.*"

Living Wisely in a Foolish World through the book of proverbs will take us deep, where wisdom lives, teaching us how to raise our families, manage our monies, discern God's will, control our speech, and so much more
In short, the book of Proverbs will show us how to live the Christian life well!

PP 1-The Title of the Book

"The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:"

The tradition of the Jews considers that Solomon wrote the Song of Songs as a young man, many of these Proverbs as a man in mid-life, and Ecclesiastes as an older, penitent man having wandered from the paths of holiness

The book of Proverbs is mostly ascribed to ***"Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:"***

Solomon, who, given freedom to ask God for anything he would want, chose wisdom, and God gave it to him abundantly

He observed everything, learned from everyone, and lived to teach it to others

PP ***"He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005."*** 1 Kings 4:32

PP ***"Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care."*** Ecclesiastes 12:9

Solomon chose carefully, selecting from his 3,000 proverbs, but the arrangement we have in the book of Proverbs was finalized later in the days of Hezekiah:

PP ***"These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied."***
Proverbs 25:1

When you think of the word '**proverb**' what comes to mind?

'*An apple a day keeps the doctor away*' or this one from Crete, '*When you want a drink of milk, you don't buy the whole cow.*'

PP The word '**proverb**' basically means a comparison

Often, but not always, a proverb set two things side by side in either a contrast or a comparison, easily memorized and recalled

PP ***"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*** Proverbs 15:1

Simple, moral statements or illustrations that highlight and teach fundamental realities about life

PP J Vernon McGee defined a proverb as '*a short sentence drawn from long experience*'

Proverbs were short sayings packed with life's teachings, easily hung in the gallery of memory

We are told that these proverbs were written historically for the training of leaders in Israel

Kings and others in the royal courts taught these nuggets of wisdom for young men in their teens and twenties whose future was bright with nobility
 Israel's teachers were passionate in their concern to lead their students in the right path
 They were training and shaping generations of leaders whose obligation was to practice the fundamental virtues of Israel as revealed in the Law and proven by experience
 But Proverbs also contain a father's instructions for his children
 98 times we see the phrase *'my son'*, pointing to the need for older, wiser men and women to teach, disciple and mentor the younger into the maturity of wisdom
 So we have in the book of Proverbs, a very intentional discipleship manual, to make people wise for service to the king, to help people mature in their lives, and we see that in its purpose

PP 2-The Purpose of the Book

"To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles." Proverbs 1:2-6

Why did Solomon write this and why were these proverbs compiled in the days of Hezekiah?
 To be able help God's people in Israel ***"To know wisdom and instruction..."*** 1:2a

PP ****Wisdom*** originally referred to mental and physical skills of craftsmen, singers, sailors and others, but it also meant what Proverbs intends with the word...skillful living

A person with wisdom has expertise in living in a way that makes life go as well as possible for him or her

PP I like how Chuck Swindoll defines wisdom as *the ability to view life as God perceives it*

PP One person wrote that *'Wisdom is the gospel of Christ reshaping us for royalty'* Orland

And it is given by God, the source of all true wisdom

And those who have received it, can teach it, or transfer it to others through *'instruction'*

Wisdom is a priceless commodity that begs to be shared, wants to go public: ***"Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice"*** Proverbs 1:20

Wisdom and 'instruction' go hand in hand, ***"at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:"*** Proverbs 1:21

Wise people want to instruct, share the moral skill they have learned

But wisdom is so beautiful, so comprehensive, that it could be compared to a multi-faceted diamond

Look at the facets from our passage: ***insight, wise dealing, prudence, knowledge, and discretion, knowledge and learning***

Each of these presents a different view of wisdom, and all of them help us live life skillfully

PP a) Wisdom for the Simple

'to give prudence to the simple' 1:4

PP *'prudence'* is not a word familiar to all of us, and basically means *intelligence that sees the reason behind things* or in short, the ability to reason through things

Those who lack it, are called the *'simple'* and they are desperately in need of wisdom

PP Wisdom is a refuge, a sanctuary from danger for the *'simple'*, a word that means *to be open*
The simple are not unintelligent people, rather they want to keep their options open, who do not want to commit to something, double-minded

PP Listen to **Proverbs 9:3-4**, *"Wisdom...calls from the highest places in the town, 'Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!'"*

PP b) Wisdom for the Youth

'knowledge and discretion to the youth'

PP *'Knowledge'* is not information, but the ability to distinguish, to understand a matter

PP *'discretion'* is the ability to create a wise plan after you have the understanding

Wisdom helps young people look at a matter long enough to understand it, and then make their plans accordingly

It is to shoot after you aim, to think through a matter first, then act on it

PP c) Wisdom for the Wise

Wise people have teachable spirits!

Wise people look for and ask for, directions in life!

"Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles." 1:5-6

They continue to grow and learn, never satisfied with the wisdom they have attained

And the result of this growing wisdom, is to receive *'guidance'*, a word that means *steerings*

PP Wise people understand the direction they should go in life

So wisdom is for those who tend to be indecisive; those who decide before they understand; as well as for those who hunger to learn that they may walk through this life well

It is a diamond that offers many different brilliant facets in life

PP 3-The Theme of the Book

Friends, do you go deep in the Word of God, or do you skim along the surface

Wisdom lies in the depths, and it is there we will be going, even as we can glimpse its source

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 1:7

Parents, teaching our children to do the laundry, change the oil, balance a checkbook, are all important, and should be taught

But of much greater value is teaching our young children to fear the Lord

In fact, parents, there is nothing greater than you can ever teach to your children than this, and ironically, there is no rarer teaching in families today than this

This is the key verse to the whole book of Proverbs, so we must understand its meaning

When you think of the *'The Fear of the Lord'*, what comes to mind?

PP It is recognizing who God is and ascribing to Him the respect, reverence, and authority He is due

A person who truly fears the Lord submits to Him and obeys Him

It is an attitude of submission and obedience to God

Anything less than obedience is not truly and genuinely *‘the fear of the Lord’*, and notice the name of God Solomon uses here

‘LORD’ in all capital letters is Yahweh, or in the Greek Jehovah, the covenantal name for God

It is the fear of the One Who has so faithfully saved us, and is keeping us saved, and lavishes the promises of His grace upon us without ceasing!

It’s that tension of seeing our awful sinfulness and His perpetually faithful grace

It produces wonder and awe, and freedom, and a desire greater than ever before to live in a way that is absolutely pleasing to God

The fear of the Lord is the joining of fear and faith to create a single-minded desire to give God

His proper place in our lives, obeying Him Who has loved us so deeply and faithfully

PP For the Psalmist, it is where *“Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”* **Psalm 85:10**

This holy awe is the beginning of knowledge, and sets a person on the path of wisdom, but *‘fools despise wisdom and instruction.’* **1:7b**

There are only two paths a person can walk through life on, and this is the other

PP *‘Fools’* are arrogant, coarse, hardened and reject God and the wisdom He gives

They have no awe, no vertical dimension of considering if their actions are pleasing to God

They despise the word of God, pursuing the way of the world and its wisdom

They don’t care if they are morally clean before God or not, they have no moral skill at all

They think this life is all they need to be concerned with and they have it under control

Let me close with what I think is a near-perfect way to describe the fear of the Lord

If you are familiar with the Wind and the Willow, then you may remember when Rat and Mole go looking for baby Otter, and stumble into the presence of God

“Suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe call upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror—indeed, he felt wonderfully at peace and happy... “*Rat*” he found breath to whisper, shaking, “*Are you afraid?*” “*Afraid?*” murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. “*Afraid! Of Him? O never, never! And yet—and yet—O, Mole, I am afraid!*” Then the two animals, crouching to the earth, bowed their heads and did worship.”

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Friends, as we embark on our journey through Proverbs, learning to Live wisely in this foolish world, let’s start by asking God to do what He assured us in the book of James

PP *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”* **James 1:5**

Amen?

Pray